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## Basic Concepts of Chinese National Religious and Philosophical Doctrines: an Introduction to Social Philosophical Study of Chinese Society

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*The notion of basic concept of culture is substantiated in the article. A new definition of the concept is given. The history of formation of the notion concept, its differences from the category and concepts are previously examined. The use of concepts helps to reveal the national picture of the world, not only at a rational level, but also at the level of sensory representations, at the intuitive level, hidden in rational terms. There is given in details the discussion, which exists in the national philosophy and cultural linguistic studies, concerning the question what concept is. It is proved that the conceptual analysis of Chinese society, the Chinese culture is an effective scientific approach that gives new results about traditional Chinese culture and modern Chinese political system. Further study may be associated with the analysis of the basic concepts that will be allocated from the ancient Chinese texts on the basis of cultural translation and interpretation-translation.*

*Keywords: social philosophy, research methods, concepts, basic concepts, the Chinese society, the Chinese government, Chinese culture.*

The concept of *national religious and philosophical doctrine* allows us to narrow research space dynamics of Chinese society as beneath them means two religious doctrines: Taoism and Confucianism. Buddhism manifested in the Chinese culture, ranging from about I B.C. to. Despite the fact that Buddhism is undergoing significant changes in its philosophical and religious-cultural base, it remains the foreign religion in China. Although it is difficult to overestimate the importance of Chinese Buddhism on the formation and maintenance of

the basic processes of the so-called *Far Eastern civilization*, to which the functioning of Chinese, Korean, Vietnamese, Japanese and other societies, living in the Asian-Pacific region.

It is also necessary to define the temporal boundaries of the research space. Traditional Chinese society in its *pure* form existed before the beginning of the XX century, before the active development of industrial and market processes, as well as a special era in the history of China's socialist period, which began in 1949 and continues up today, albeit in a converted form of

*Chinese socialism* doctrine which was developed outstanding Chinese politician Deng Xiaoping<sup>1</sup> and his followers.

Confucianism and Taoism represent two ideological systems of traditional Chinese society, to some extent ideologically opposed, while merging into a deep spiritual life of Chinese society, creating all necessary conditions for completeness cultural, religious, ethnic and other forms of social and personal identity. Thus, they are taken as the national religious and philosophical doctrines in this study. Currently, a number of researchers as an example of successful formation of nation-states cite the example of the People's Republic<sup>2</sup>. Much of this success is related to the specifics of Taoism and Confucianism, which, since ancient times, and acting as ideological systems up to date, produced a favorable ideological platform for the formation of a unified Chinese nation in the XX-XXI centuries.

The next concept that needs clarification is the notion of *basic concept*. The notion of *concept* is developed in the complex of Humanities and Social Sciences, who borrow it from linguistics. At the beginning of XX century in the social sciences and humanities is happening so-called *Linguistic turn*. This *linguistic turn* was due to the fact that the classical social sciences who have taken as a reference *scientific* methods of *mechanics* and tried to create a kind of *social mechanics*, were forced to admit the impossibility of creating a social theory in the likeness of classical science. Searches for methodological framework, adequate complex social reality led to the study of scientific languages in which the scientific model of social reality *is written*. Linguistic structuralism, created by Ferdinand de Saussure<sup>3</sup>, was used and transformed as one of the leading programs of social research methodology. Beginning with the first third of the XX century the social research is largely based

on structuralist approach. Together with the development of the methodology of structuralism in the social and human studies come a number of concepts and categories, proving heuristic in practice of modern scientific research. So, in the social and human studies appears and fixed term *concept*, which is widely used in such special sciences as psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics, cognitive linguistics and cultural linguistics, etc.

However, it is difficult to give one single philosophical definition of the concept, as currently the term *concept* is variable enough. Various researchers who use and use this term in their research, contribute to its content significant subjective moments that cannot be ignored in the integration of all relevant definitions of the concept. Total in all definitions of the concept – it's his assignment to the mental processes associated with the presence in them sustainable (typical) content of cultural phenomena. Concept has linguistic form and in its being there are involved verbal and non-verbal languages. In logical studies, the term *concept* has been used as an analogue of the term *content of the concept*. Thus, by the term *concept* in the logic there is given the clearly distinguishing line between the various definitions. Concept pointed to a clear definition of the content of some specific definition and built the border in relation to other definitions, which thus belonged to a completely different concept that referred to a fundamentally different concept.

Borrowed from the logic the term *concept* in the social, humanitarian, cultural studies moved away from its close connection with the meaning, and the gap was recorded by scientists who lined their understanding of the concept, pointing to his differences with it the logical and philosophical meaning. Serious and thorough examination of the concept was made by Yu.E. Prokhorov<sup>4</sup>, who has analyzed all the possible definitions of the concept in philosophy, cultural studies, art

history, linguistics, art history, psycholinguistics, sociolinguistics and artistic studies of conceptual art. As a result of this work Yu.E. Prokhorov gives the definition of the concept as *the element of a national picture of the world*, as a form of human understanding consolidate peace within everlasting existential chaos. He writes: "The concept is a developed set of rules and assessments for organizing elements of chaos picture of being determined by the features of the activities of representatives of particular linguocultural community, enshrined in their national picture of the world and broadcast by means of language in their communication"<sup>5</sup>.

Concept is a kind of bridge, connecting point of artistic, philosophical and logical thinking. This conclusion is made on the basis of the article content by V.Z. Demyankov *The Notion and Concept in Literature and Scientific Knowledge*<sup>6</sup>. Author follows the history of the emergence of the term *concept* in a modern space of research and analyzes the originality of the concept, using the etymological analysis. Origin of the term *concept* refers to its meaning as a kind of initial, pre-given sense to understand things, processes and events. V.Z. Demyankov sets the origin of the term *concept* from the word *embryo* and believes that the concept keeps the prerequisites to building specific meanings and concepts that exist in the culture determines the peculiar way the material embodiment of these meanings in specific things, events, and processes. He writes: "Differentiation (of terms *notion* and *concept*) due to the following line: notions are what people negotiate about, people construct them in order to have a common language when discussing issues, concepts also exist by themselves, people remodel them with different degrees of confidence"<sup>7</sup>.

Thus, the concept comes to social, humanitarian, anthropology and cultural studies, since the analysis of phenomena in these studies cannot be holistic and comprehensive, stopping

on creating logic schemes, movements of abstract concepts and key definitions. Concept indicates content that was originally stored in the language culture. And even if it is not manifested in logical aligned definitions, it still lives in the culture and continues to influence many of the processes taking place in the social organism. Concepts belong to the structures of meaning-birth, they are stable frameworks of meanings and essentially form the content of these meanings that over and over again, century after century inevitably occur in a particular culture and verbal texts, and in non-verbal and philosophical ideologemes and mythologemes of collective unconscious the bearers of this culture. From this it follows that the concepts are most clearly performed in the form of art. However, in modern philosophy conceptual analysis is gaining momentum, as in search mechanisms of positive social and cultural identity scientists refer to concepts as sustainable and primary repositories of cultural meanings, reproducing all the historical cycle of existence of a particular social organism. In contrast to the notion, concepts are connected with *content*, so they often take the form of image with the help of which a national picture of the world are reproduced basic structural elements that distinguish the content of this national picture of the world from the other national picture of the world.

Form of existence of the concept of culture in this social organism is language. Therefore, at present the most significant research concepts are held in different linguistic schools. Other sciences generally use the achievements of linguistic researches and work with concepts in an interdisciplinary way. Russia has a serious scientific schools that are engaged in conceptual analysis of language, among them are the studies of N.D. Arutunova<sup>8</sup> and her students *Logical Analysis of Language*, research group of Professor Z.D. Popova<sup>9</sup> and others.

In cognitive linguistics concept is considered in the levels of formation. The basis for the formation of concepts are: a sensual experience, the operating objective activity, intellectual activity in relation to other concepts, language communication and independent development of language elements. It may be noted that the definition of the concepts developed in cognitive linguistics based on the philosophical base, uses philosophical language. Thus, E.S. Kubryakova indicates that the concept is an information structure, a separate component of mental or psychic activity, memory unit, conceptual language system, central nervous system and element of the picture of the world<sup>10</sup>. I.Yu. Nikishin emphasizes that concepts are in the form of mental images and arise from operating activities, ensuring the development of cognitive abilities and the ability to navigate in the world<sup>11</sup>. Cognitive linguistics in the study of concepts goes to the level of interdisciplinary research, with the help of the language there can be reconstructed ethno-cultural view of the world where the role of concept plays cognitive tools and simultaneously supports sustainable and original cultural meaning.

Similarly unfolds the psycholinguistic study of the concept. Representatives of this scientific field research focused on the direct and indirect linkages between being first and mental human activity. A.A. Zalevskaia in her paper *Psycholinguistic Approach to the Understanding of the Concept* emphasizes specially-scientific interpretations of concept as '*perceptual-cognitive-affective formations of dynamic nature*'. Concept operates in the psyche and is subject to its domestic laws, so this concept differs from conditionality concept (which is a pure product of rational scientific thinking)<sup>12</sup>.

In psycholinguistics there is emphasized the synthetic character of the form and content of the concept, which is being sufficiently stable unit of

mental processes, bears imaginative, conceptual and valuable elements of the psyche. Concept is open in prototyping, through the creation of Gestalt, frames, scripts, and other more or less stable mental forms. When this feature is to describe the concepts of psycholinguistics in the structure of specific mental processes, concepts considered here as an individual belonging to a given individual, and existing only in the context of its inner life. It is interesting psycholinguistic description of concepts frames, distinctive cultural stereotypes, clichés situations that characterize, for example, scientific stereotyping imposed (including the so-called pop-science (the term of A.Ya. Flier<sup>13</sup>)). Frame combines linguistic and non-linguistic forms, creates a stable association in human mental activity<sup>14</sup>.

Except the concept-frames psycholinguistics highlight concepts scripts, concepts, schemes and concepts-gestalt. Concepts-gestalts are of particular importance for the social and philosophical studies, as they represent a holistic and sustainable way of image combining sensual and rational components and reflect the diversity of all the information in the understanding of the situation that gave rise to this concept of Gestalt. Concepts gestalt unfold at the mental level of human mental activity.

Concept occupies a central position in linguistics, which seeks to explore cultural processes using linguistic techniques which have the character of exact and mathematical software toolkits. In Russia the cultural linguistics is developed in the writings of S.G. Vorkacheva, G.G. Slyshkin, V.I. Karasik. The level of synthesis of linguistics and sociocultural research works of N.D. Arutunova Y.S. Stepanov, S.S. Neretina, A.P. Ogurtsov and A. Wierzbicki.

So, G.G. Slyshkin emphasizes that the very use of the concept in a particular scientific research points to the socio-cultural conditioning of the subject of this study. Through the manipulation

of the concept there is an integration of the results of scientific psychology, linguistics and socio-cultural studies. Concept reflects the existence of a stable relationship between the direct experiential knowledge and deep cultural values and attitudes, and binds them together<sup>15</sup>.

V.I. Karasik and G.G. Slyshkin point out a number of essential features of the concept, which can be used to solve problems of this study. First, the concept is in the mind of man, and secondly, the concept is defined by the culture in which it operates, and thirdly, the concept is manifested in language and speech, and fourthly, the concept keeps a certain cultural values; fifthly, the concept has no specific definition, it is conditional and *blurred* concept consists in a meaningful point of consciousness where there is a core of stable associations and blurred, moving away from this point, following the vector of stable associations; sixth, the concept of variable, including in relation to cultural norms (may change from positive to negative evaluation), the seventh, the concept is a complex of verbal and non-verbal form of existence of cultural values<sup>16</sup>.

Currently, research of concepts are so common that there are works where distinguished levels of conceptual research. Thus, S.G. Vorkachev highlights the following levels: the level of the everyday (*naïve*) national picture of the world (a broad understanding of the concept); the level of semantic wholes reflecting specific subjects carriers of these meanings (average level); the level of semantic abstract and general education, cultural generalizations expressing national specifics culture of peace in her mental dimension (narrow understanding of the concept)<sup>17</sup>.

Great influence on the development of the theory concepts in domestic trials were unemployed Austrian scientist A. Wierzbicka, who develops a sociocultural analysis through the study of semantics in her works: *Semantic*

*primitives, Understanding cultures through the keywords, Semantic Universals and Description of Languages*. A. Wierzbicka's original thesis is connected with the fact that the national language carries a national perception of environment and is representative of national thinking. Despite the fact that the specific mechanisms of the relationship between language and national thinking not significantly clarified, A. Wierzbicka insists on evidence of their connection<sup>18</sup>. A. Wierzbicka demonstrates its research procedures by examining the so-called *keywords*. To understand the specifics of Russian culture it takes, for example, words such as *friendship, vulgarity*, etc. Actually, the problem of cultural linguistics is seen by A. Wierzbicka in finding such keywords that can be used to explain the actual mechanisms of culture, which determine the specificity of the culture, but not recognized on an everyday level. *Keywords* in the terminology of A. Wierzbicka are identified by her followers with concepts. Voluminous dictionaries concept of a national culture should become the research results. In 1997 Yu.S. Stepanov has published *Constants. Dictionary of Russian Culture*<sup>19</sup>, since 2001 the Volgograd linguistics annually publish *Anthology of Concepts*<sup>20</sup>.

Yu.S. Stepanov defines the concept as the basic unit of culture that allows to understand the integrity of the cultural worldview. He understands the concept very well, philosophically, as a single historical, universally-cultural and ethnic memory, both social and individual. Concept, the scientist believes, is the very meaning, which takes place in the process of thinking. Concept is a *quantum* of knowledge that deploys particular full of sense knowledge when it comes to stimulus<sup>21</sup>. Yu.S. Stepanov considers the indispensable materializes as the special features of the concept. *Concept is the collective unconscious of the socio-cultural (especially ethnic) groups, as enshrined in material*

*phenomena: language, ceremonies, rituals, and holidays.* Concepts certainly experienced this living cultural phenomenon rather than purely logical constructions. Yu.S. Stepanov distributes concepts depending on their carriers to individual, national and universal. He believes the national research concepts to be the most real.

S.S. Neretina and A.P. Ogurtsova believe that linguistic and philosophical understanding of the concepts, however, are different. If the linguistics concept is associated with stable linguistic structures, and researcher and linguist shows there is the sense in these structures, but the philosophy operates the concept as the way of sense-birth mechanism that is actualized in speech communications<sup>22</sup>.

Generalized understanding of the concept, which can be used for social and philosophical studies is suggested by L.V. Mikeshina, who connects the concept with meaning formation, defines the concept as *quantum* of knowledge about the real and imagined worlds, and sees opportunities in the sequencing of the concept of subjective experience, in the classification of this type of experience. L.V. Mikeshina highlights panhuman and universal concepts that take specific forms depending on the different languages, different cultural environments. She uses an interesting phrase *associative semantic links* that are present in different cultural storehouses of human knowledge<sup>23</sup>.

Particular attention is paid to the concept in the philosophy of postmodernism. Thus, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari in the paper *What is philosophy?* (1981) are associated with the philosophy of designing unique, special notions – *concepts*. First of all, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari reject whatsoever similarities between concepts of science (including linguistics) and concepts created by philosophy. Creating a concept – it is the act of creation, when the chaos of being is overcome through

the creation of new philosophical concepts. Such breakthrough concepts were Descartes' *cogito*, *monad* of Leibnitz, *a priori* of Kant, *potency* in philosophy of Schelling, *duration* in the writings of Henri Bergson, etc. Concept is a personal discovery of special units of intellectual space by a philosopher, overcoming the chaos of being in a particular historical epoch in the act of creation of conceptual ideas. Concepts always have an unusual language design, which did not exist before them. Its source can be everyday routine, the word selected for fixing the concept may shock or may be unusually archaic or even a defiant neologism<sup>24</sup>. Thus, Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari broke the ties of the concept with a purely linguistic research and argued that the creation of concepts is a philosophical act. Concepts created during the philosophical creativity, capable of producing other concepts, less voluminous content. The thinkers argue that it is precisely the philosophy that creates concepts, moreover, it is the main and only objective of it. Creating concepts, philosophy emphasizes the revolutionary changes in the culture, embodies them in the newly created conceptual idea and thus shows these changes, gives them a free life in the culture.

For this study, there is no need to consider the concept of understanding the creators in manifestos of the so-called modern *conceptual art*. Appropriate analysis of these manifestos was made by A.A. Semenova in the thesis *Methodological possibilities of cultural theory to analyze the modification of ancient concept of 'state' in the Russian culture of the XXI century*<sup>25</sup>.

Thus, we can conclude that the application of the concept is justified in social and philosophical studies of national socio-cultural spaces, including the analysis of socio-cultural space of the Chinese society. It is through the concept can reveal the deep cultural meanings,

their content, language expressions associate these meanings with specific words, and cultural phenomena such as rituals, traditions, festivals. Concept necessarily reflect the values cultivated in the social organism, it is a unit of cultural memory, played in the socio-psychological and personal psychological experiences associated with the unconscious and/or conscious manifestation of the fundamental cultural values, norms, and standards in their content and figurative aspect.

Taking into account the results of applying the term *concept* as a tool for the study of social and cultural processes of a particular social organism (in this case – the Chinese society in its traditional form), can be refined the notion of *basic concepts*. Under the basic concepts in this article will be understood ***the key conceptual structures, without which this culture ceases to***

***exist***. These are necessary and sufficient concepts that form the foundation of a national picture of the world, they are the basic units of this painting, unique national principles concentrated natural ordering of existential chaos. Learning of basic concepts allows to catch the rod of the given culture, to indicate the originality of this social body, allowing it to stably exist in historical time and occupy a special social space in the universal world.

Agreeing with Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari that the basic concepts are generated in philosophical thinking, and given that the vast majority of researchers indicate their concepts embodied in the forms of language (including verbal), future work will try to allocate more basic concepts that are typical for the Chinese society, on the basis of categorical analysis of ancient Chinese philosophical texts.

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**Базовые концепты китайских  
национальных религиозно-философских доктрин:  
введение в социальное философское исследование  
китайского общества**

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*В статье обосновывается понятие «базовый концепт культуры». Дается новое определение данного понятия. Предварительно рассматривается история становления понятия «концепт», его отличие от «категории» и «понятия». Использование концептов позволяет раскрыть национальную картину мира не только на рациональном уровне, но и на уровне чувственных представлений, на интуитивном уровне, скрытом в рациональных понятиях. Подробно рассматривается дискуссия, существующая в отечественной философии и лингвистических культурных исследованиях о том, что такое концепт. Доказывается, что концептуальный анализ китайского общества, китайской культуры – эффективный научный подход, который дает новые сведения о традиционной китайской культуре и современной китайской политической системе. Дальнейшее исследование может быть связано с анализом базовых концептов, которые будут выделены из древнекитайских культурных текстов на основе переводов и интерпретаций переводов.*

*Ключевые слова: социальная философия, методы исследования, концепт, базовые концепты, китайское общество, китайское государство, китайская культура.*

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